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ABSTRACT

Community colleges face serious challenges arising from decreased budgets, greater pressures on faculty, and an increasingly heterogeneous student population. To cope with these challenges community colleges need to develop innovative instructional strategies to ensure the fulfillment of their missions. Five conditions may be identified under which teaching innovation can best occur: an administrative structure set up specifically to facilitate change; a reward system established for faculty who explore educational alternatives; the allocation of appropriate resources to make change possible; faculty and administrative agreement on the definition of problems and the types of instructional innovations which might address them; and agreement that the problems are difficult, that failures will occur, but that new techniques will be tried. Using this framework, LaGuardia Community College has implemented two innovative programs. The first project sought a systematic way to integrate what was taught in the classroom with student experiences in 12-week cooperative education internships. Now recognized as a national model for cooperative education, this program operates through classroom instruction, application of knowledge on internship sites, and ongoing reinforcement through seminars. The second project resulted in a faculty development program which taught instructors to reinforce basic skills while providing subject area instruction. (HB)

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THE FUTURE OF TEACHING IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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THE FUTURE OF TEACHING IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

There are some wonderful, exciting things happening in community colleges today. Yet, I cannot report that all is well. We face many problems at our institutions, and I believe they are likely to get worse but hopefully we see improvement. It is certainly not a time where one can envision our teachers expending their time and energy to find ways to improve learning, because in the years ahead the burden on them, and on teaching, will be heavier than ever before. Yet, many of these teachers are the same teachers who are getting older, whose salaries will not keep pace with inflation, who may not have students to teach in their own disciplines and thus face retraining, inter-university transfer or worse yet, retrenchment.

Decreased budgets, resulting from reduced state and local aid, may result in an increase in teaching hours or larger class sizes. More adjuncts will probably be hired both to save money and also to keep financial resources flexible. Then, too, the use of part-time teachers will mean further workload for those faculty who have to carry out more non-instructional duties.

We are likely to see an increase in the growth of foreign students and immigrant populations requiring instruction in English as a Second Language. These students are as difficult to teach as are the academically deficient open access population. Thus, our teachers will continue to see an increasingly heterogeneous student population with differences in age range, life experiences, language fluency, academic readiness and varying pressures due to economic and social responsibilities.

These are but a few of the forces which will have a deleterious effect on the morale of even our most conscientious instructors and which could result in less successful, rather than more successful, teaching. In effect, that statement, less successful rather than more successful teaching, forms the challenge of the eighties, not only to keep the opportunity for learning from regressing but to create a climate that meets the needs of a complex and diverse student body, despite the adverse conditions surrounding us. For community colleges are first and foremost teaching institutions and, if the negative forces overwhelm our teachers, they will lose their ability and their desire to perform. What then will be our purpose?

Today, I do not intend to discuss the future of teaching by recounting a series of probable innovations for the eighties. One or more new ideas can be seen in almost every institution and the literature is full of descriptions of these developments. Instead, I would like to discuss the future of teaching in terms of what I believe are the conditions under which teaching innovation can occur because adoption of even the best idea will not come about without a good deal of support and nurturing.

In my mind, there are at least five conditions that must exist in order for instructional innovation to occur:

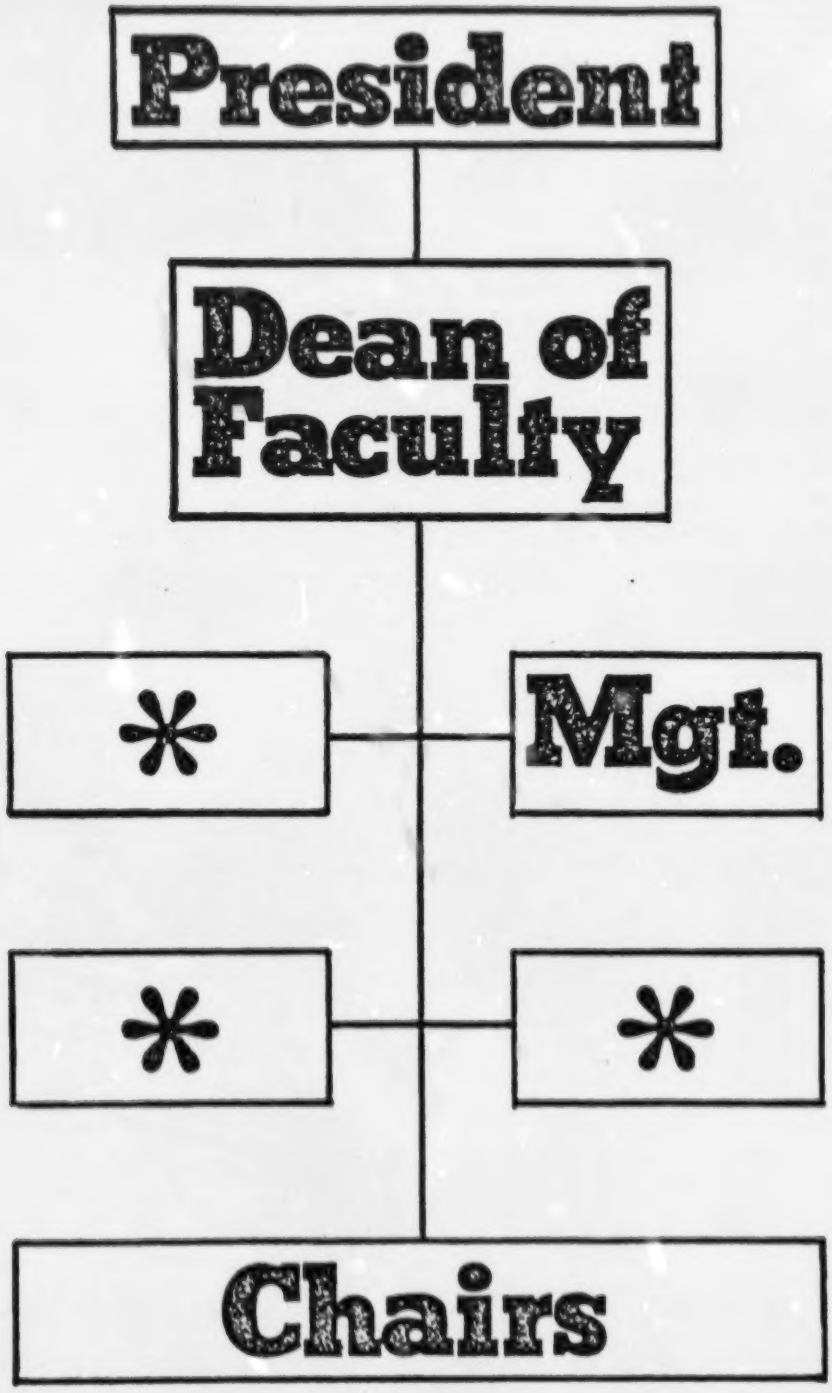
1. There must be an administrative structure specifically set up to facilitate change.
2. There must be real reward systems established for faculty who are committed to exploring educational alternatives.

3. Appropriate resources in both money and time, must be allocated to make change realistically possible.
4. There must be agreement among faculty and administrators as to what the problems are, and as to the kinds of instructional innovations that might address these problems successfully.
5. There must be a wholehearted recognition that we are facing tough problems - that addressing students' needs successfully is difficult and may take a long time - and that failures will be accepted as new techniques are tried.

I will amplify each of these conditions of change through two examples of what has been happening recently at my institution. To set the stage, let me first acknowledge that we clearly do not have all the answers; we also have plenty of problems that we have not resolved. And second, I will admit to you with some trepidation that I don't know how well my own institution will be able to function if some of our worst fears of the eighties materilize.

Given the conditions we face, plus everyone's general resistance to change, I believe that the role that administration has in bringing about instructional improvement is critical. That is, teaching improvement in the eighties will be directly related to the success administrators have in building a partnership with faculty. One cannot do it without the other. The traditional view that faculty are responsible for academic growth and development will have to be altered to place emphasis on the administrative responsibilities of Presidents and Deans to create a climate that promotes change.

The functions of an academic administration can be seen in at least two ways. The first has us running the everyday operations; somehow controlling the budget, processing adjunct payment forms; handling personnel matters, or even worrying about defective blackboards. The second view has us improving the institution by identifying problems, considering strategies, and facilitating changes at the departmental level. Unfortunately, most institutions have their deans so tied down with day-to-day operational responsibilities that the deans have little time to think creatively about improving the institution. The result is usually a structure that facilitates little innovation but that, hopefully, it simply keeps the college going. If enrollment is up, if the community is tranquil and the budget is adequate, maintaining the status quo may be all a college wants to achieve. Few colleges today can boast of such tranquility. Therefore, getting by on a day-to-day basis has become an end in itself. Yet more can be done. I believe presidents and deans need to reorganize administrative responsibilities so that operational duties can be handled by one individual, and allow other deans the time to do the job they were hired to do. What dean wasn't hired with the mandate to identify problems and to create imaginative solutions? Line responsibilities, however, often make such worthwhile aims difficult, if not impossible, to translate into realistic objectives. I propose an administrative flow chart that looks like this. (Show Chart). Under this structure, assistant and associate deans or faculty assigned to the office on released time function as "facilitators" and do not have line responsibilities. Chairpeople do not report directly to them, so they have



*Dean Facilitators or Faculty Facilitators who are given release time to work out of the Dean's Office.

no constituency to defend. Dean-Facilitators are recruited and given assignments because of their special expertise in solving problems in specific areas, and their performance is judged on that basis. Thus, they see their role not as managers but as individuals who have the responsibility to help faculty systematically achieve their goals.

Many presidents are extremely sensitive to the criticism that they have too many deans. State and County Offices seem to be wedded to the idea that all public colleges must have proportionately the same number of deans, regardless of what the president might want them to do. A president's decision to invest in this type of administrative structure may first require overcoming the resistance of budget-conscious outside agencies. Next, there is the issue of assessing the importance of the problems to be solved by each dean when compared to other claims on institutional resources. For example, a decision to hire a "dean-facilitator", and to provide released time for faculty to work with this facilitator in improving teaching, may have to be weighed against the need for hiring more counselors, more tutors, more recruiters, or even more maintenance staff to clean the place up. If these sound like hard choices, you are right.

But let us assume that the president agrees to create an administrative structure that has as a primary aim the facilitation of innovation to increase student learning. The administration must then consider a reward system and a process that identifies core institutional problems. The traditional reward system, of course, comes in the form of promotion and tenure to those who commit themselves to the institution's goal of improving student performance. A secondary and supportive

reward structure, perhaps even more essential, can come in the form of released time appropriations to faculty, allowing them systematically to go about implementing their program ideas for meeting student needs. Released time must be based on the depth and quality of the anticipated contribution to the institution; a written contract should be negotiated, stating clearly what the faculty member is to accomplish for the amount of released time awarded. By these actions the message will go out that new ideas are supported and encouraged. I know that released time is viewed by some administrators as a kind of faculty "rip off." However, for the price of an adjunct replacement, you can have very talented individuals enthusiastically address a particular institutional problem. It seems to me that this is a small cost in exchange for a well-motivated change agent.

Finally, as a way of assuring that all faculty are adequately recognized for their accomplishments, the college's personnel review committee should invite each person annually to summarize his or her special contributions.

Through an annual, college-wide goal setting process, each department should set objectives for the coming year, with the chairperson assigning specific objectives to the appropriate individuals. These objectives can then form the basis for the annual evaluation of faculty. Some goals set by individual departments will, however, be of interest to several departments, and thus to the administration. Those shared goals become the college-wide objectives for the year.

Let me illustrate how two such college-wide objectives were

identified, and how they are moving toward fulfillment. The first is to make cooperative education more effective as an instructional program; the second is a project to improve teaching throughout the curriculum. I selected these because both are so relevant to meeting the needs of the students of the eighties. They also both show how facilitators sought to enter into a partnership with faculty to effect change, and how faculty have been rewarded for their efforts.

All day session students in my College are required to complete three twelve week cooperative education internships as part of their course of study. After several years experience with the program, however, it became clear that we had a problem. As part of annual goal-setting, many of the departments reported that, contrary to literature espousing the virtues of cooperative education, teachers saw little or no relationship between what was happening in the classroom and what students were experiencing on their internships. They said students were responding passively to their internships, focusing primarily on the work tasks alone; that they seemed to be missing all else that was happening around them. Liberal Arts Chairs, in particular, complained that internships seemed of little educational value to their students. In response, an institutional objective was set: we had to find a systematic way to integrate what was taught in the classroom with what went on in the internship setting. The process, which is still in progress, began by putting together seven teams of faculty. That is, a faculty member from each department was selected to work with a counterpart from the Division of Cooperative Education.

These fourteen volunteers chose to participate, I suspect, because of a combination of genuine interest in change and a desire to vary their workload with something different from their routine. The team members were initially each given two courses of released time. They were told that because no one yet knew how to link the classroom and the internship, there would be absolutely no sanctions for failure. Experimental ideas, no matter how interesting, sometimes do not materialize into useful programs, and the fault should not rest with the experimenters.

Two Dean-Facilitators, one with expertise in Cooperative Education and the other in Curriculum Development, were assigned to work with the teams. The facilitators organized the work of the faculty, developing outlines that required the step-by-step creation of materials. Drafts were edited and reedited. As program ideas developed, they arranged for pilot trials of the materials. The facilitators were in touch with the Chairpersons at every stage of the project because, while the facilitators directed the developmental phase, ultimately, the Chairpersons would be responsible for implementation.

The project became known as TAR - Teach in the classroom, Apply on the internships, and Reinforce during seminars held at the College while the students are on their internships. It has taken several years, but TAR is now recognized as a national model for cooperative education. Yet, and this is said in all honesty, and in respect for the process, we still do not have all the answers. What we do have is more answers than we started out with. Each year we have refined and revised our work based on systematic feedback from faculty and

students. Each team member's accomplishments were used to support candidacy for reappointment and tenure; they also became the basis for many articles and presentations at conferences. The ultimate reward for the participants, however, was that they and their colleagues were teaching differently than before and finding they were more successful.

The second institutional problem emerged through a study conducted by Institutional Research to assess the basic skill levels of students who were nearing graduation. We found that students who had entered with poor skills, even after they were brought up to acceptable levels, did not have the same facility as did students who entered college already possessing these skills. In effect, students' newly-learned skills regressed as they moved further away from basic skills courses through college-level courses.

When the findings of the study were discussed with the Chairpersons, they first saw the problem occurring everywhere but in their classes: they blamed inadequacies in the basic skills program, negative student attitudes, even shortcomings in the counseling staff. Finally, one Chairperson said, "It is our responsibility, too. We should be reinforcing basic skills in our classes but tell me, how do you do it"? The tone of the comment clearly communicated that once again, the administration was driving them crazy because such administrative expectations implied that the faculty could do something which in reality they were not trained to accomplish. It is a progression of these misconceptions that drive administrators and faculty further apart.

The solution began when one faculty member came to me and said she had an idea about how to create instructional approaches that would enable faculty to teach in their disciplines while simultaneously reinforcing skills - that is, strategies which would guide students systematically to use their reading, writing, oral and listening skills while learning the content of their subject area courses. So, we gave her released time and a temporary assignment to the Dean's office. She selected three other faculty members, each representing a different basic skills area, to work with her and to draft an approach. By the end of the year, a catalogue had been developed that contained forty-three strategies for reinforcing basic skills. There are five major areas addressed in the Catalogue: Gauging Students' Skills Levels; Reinforcing Reading Skills; Implementing Integrated Skills Reinforcement in the content course; creating and preparing for tests, and getting student feedback on the course.

It became clear that learning these strategies and actually integrating them into a course would not be accomplished simply by making the catalogue available to faculty. With the aid of Vocational Education and Title III funds plus a fair amount of operating money, we began a slow, long-range training strategy. Each year four teams of five faculty members from diverse departments work with four team leaders - those who developed the original catalogue. Thus, we are training twenty persons each year; and at the conclusion of the year's training, each faculty member is asked to contribute his or her ideas to the annual revision of the catalogue.

In the Fall, the first thing each faculty member does is to identify a course that he or she will teach in the Spring. Then, through cross-disciplinary group meetings and work with the catalogue, participating faculty become familiar with the Integrated Skills Reinforcement Strategies, and in turn, develop materials for the course they will teach in the Spring. This work is gathered by the teacher into two guides - a guide for students, The ISR Learning Guide, and a guide for the teacher, The ISR Guide to Instruction. Both will be used in teaching the course in the Spring.

In the Spring the materials and approaches are implemented in the selected class. Group members (and leaders) are encouraged to visit each other's classes, and videotape is used as a tool for self-evaluation. Following the implementation of the ISR strategies in the Spring, the faculty member is helped to explore applications of the approach to other courses.

Informal feedback, and three consecutive annual studies conducted indicate that faculty have responded very favorably to the training. This was further substantiated by an outside evaluator, who found among the participants, "psychological ownership of the reinforcement project ... as they spoke enthusiastically of collaborative effort, and expressed appreciation to the institution for providing the opportunity to spend a year thinking about teaching."

There is nothing abstract about these two problems or the solutions. The approach to each problem was similar. There was an understanding that finding new ways of doing things took time, and that while quick

fixes might look good, little change would take place. Schools have a long history, and there is time to develop slowly and consistently, building on each year's accomplishments. In each case there was an administrative structure to facilitate change. There was an agreement among the faculty and administrators as to the core problems facing the institutions. The faculty were given appropriate time and resources. They were rewarded, in real ways, for their commitment to and success with change. And finally, there existed a climate that accepted failure as new techniques were tried.

This kind of environment obviously supports and encourages many projects that go on at the departmental level without the aid of Dean-Facilitators. Success breeds success as the faculty are recognized professionally through articles, books, speaking engagements and the receipt of government grants. The creative momentum becomes infectious and this attitude keeps the institution moving forward; it averts what has been called "the reclusive syndrome" where good work is scorned by colleagues who do not want to feel pressured as "selling out to the administration." From an institutional view, a clear picture emerges regarding which faculty are capable of indepth contributions and that picture is useful when tenure decisions are made.

It seems inevitable that in the decade ahead there will be more integrated use of various instructional technologies. There is likely to be more imaginative use of self-paced instruction, of cooperative education and independent study. The cost of using micro-computers with their interactive capability is now cheap enough for wide use and

seems to be fascinating many of the faculty. Text book publishers will begin to market combinations of books, visual aids and software, together with instructions for their use. It is likely that with these support systems the work of the teacher could improve. However, before improvement will be a broadly based accomplishment, I think a change in the basic teaching equation has to be considered. Years ago, colleges were elite academies and there was little call for innovative teaching improvements. Essentially no matter how bad the teaching was, the students found a way to learn. The underlying philosophy, that it was ultimately the students' responsibility to learn and the instructors responsibility to teach, seemed to work well until the sixties when the egalitarian role of Higher Education swept the nation. The equation stayed the same but something went wrong because many students did not learn. Unfortunately, they did not learn when the instructor taught even with enormous remedial effort. One can obviously argue that those who cannot or will not learn should not be in college and that is the way it is,but what would happen if the equation shifted so that some of the responsibility for student learning shifts to the teacher. It is admittedly a difficult concept, one that may never be implemented because of the pressure within our academic community. In the coming years, another reason for change, often advanced, is that colleges will be unable to compete for students and, therefore, faculty will respond by implementing new approaches to improve student learning. Another pressure that could bring about a similar response is that state and local governments will seek greater

accountability. Unfortunately, to stake the future of teaching on this scenario is a little like hoping for a war to solve the unemployment problem. I then return to my original thesis, that teaching improvement will only result in a structure that supports and encourages innovation.

Even with all our problems, the decade ahead holds great promise:

If we focus on effective teaching as our goal;

If we design our administrative structures to facilitate change;

If we establish real reward systems and put resources behind them;

If we find ways to agree on what the problems are, and what types of solutions might be tried.

Our task now - the task of all of us, administrators and teachers working together as a team of educators - is to cultivate new ideas. Together we can and will meet successfully the challenge of the eighties.

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